

REPTILIA: SQUAMATA: COLUBRIDAE

TANTILLA CUCULLATA

Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Wilson, L.D., R.K. Vaughan, and J.R. Dixon. 2000. *Tantilla cucullata*.

***Tantilla cucullata* Minton**
Trans-Pecos Black-headed Snake

Tantilla cucullata Minton 1956:449. Type locality, "six miles south-southeast of Alpine, Brewster County, Texas, at an elevation of about 5,000 feet." Holotype, Field Museum of Natural History 74384, adult male, collected 1 July 1955 by S.A. Minton, Jr.

Tantilla diabolus Fouquette and Potter 1961:144. Type locality, "Horace Fawcett Ranch, 37 miles north of Del Rio, Val Verde Co., Texas." Holotype, Texas Natural History Collection 24647, adult male, collected 28 March 1959 by G.E. Drewry.

Tantilla rubra diabolus: Smith and Werler 1969:172. First use of combination.

Tantilla ruber diabolus: Leviton 1972:179. *Lapsus*.

Tantilla rubra cucullata: Degenhardt et al. 1976:225. First use of combination.

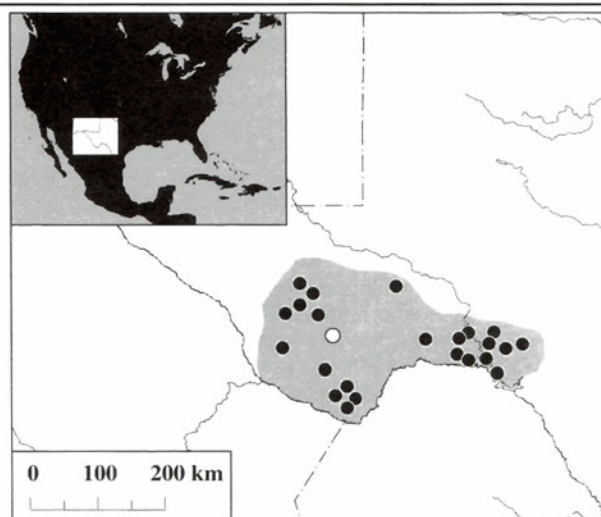
• **CONTENT.** No subspecies are currently recognized (Dixon et al. 2000). See Remarks.

• **DEFINITION.** *Tantilla cucullata* has a uniform tan to pale brown dorsum. The head pattern consists of a black head cap and nape band separated by a divided or middorsally-narrowed pale nuchal collar, which does not cross the tip of the parietal scales, or a completely black head and nape, with no evidence of a pale nuchal collar. The venter is immaculate cream. Ventrals number 164–180 in males, 160–180 in females; subcaudals are 63–81 in males, 68–83 in females. Ventrals plus subcaudals number 233–260 in males and 236–263 in females. Smooth dorsal scales are in 15 rows throughout. The cloacal scute (= anal plate) is divided. Head scales are as follows: no loreal; postnasal and single preocular in contact or separated by contact of prefrontal and 2nd supralabial on one or both sides; supralabials 7, with 3rd and 4th entering orbit; infralabials 6, with first 4 in contact with anterior chinshields, 4th largest, first pair usually in contact, separating mental and anterior chinshields, but sometimes not; postoculars 2; temporals usually 1+1. Total length in snakes of all ages ranges from 172–678 mm and tail length from 49–159 mm. Relative tail length is 0.217–0.285.

• **DESCRIPTIONS.** The most complete description is that given by Dixon, et al. (2000); others are in most of the guides listed under Pertinent Literature. Van Devender and Bradley (1994) described fossil vertebrae.

• **ILLUSTRATIONS.** Black and white photographs are found in Minton (1956), Treadwell and Hibbits (1969), Smith and Werler (1969), Easterla (1975), and Degenhardt et al. (1976). Color photographs are in Tenant (1984, 1985, 1998), Tenant and Bartlett (2000), and Werler and Dixon (2000). Line drawings are in Conant (1958, 1975), Fouquette and Potter (1961), Conant and Collins (1991, 1998), and Powell et al. (1998). Fouquette and Potter (1961) also included a black and white photograph. Colored drawings are in Conant (1975), Smith and Brodie (1982) and Conant and Collins (1991, 1998). A color photograph is located in the file collection at the University of Kansas Museum of Natural History (per Irwin and Collins 1995).

• **DISTRIBUTION.** This species is found from near Shafter,



MAP. Range of *Tantilla cucullata*; the circle indicates the type locality; dots mark known records.



FIGURE. Adult *Tantilla cucullata* from Jeff Davis County, Texas (top) and collared morph from 7 mi W Langtry, Val Verde County, Texas (photographs courtesy of R. Wayne Van Devender).

Presidio County, through the Big Bend region (Davis and Chisos Mountains), and east to the Dolan Falls area of Val Verde County, Texas. The range was previously illustrated in Dixon (1987) and several of the guides listed under Pertinent Literature.

• **FOSSIL RECORD.** Vertebrae are known from Late Wisconsin and Middle Holocene deposits in Maravillas Canyon Cave in the Black Gap Wildlife Management Area, Brewster County, Texas (Van Devender and Bradley 1994).

• **PERTINENT LITERATURE.** Taxonomic notes are included in Degenhardt and Milstead (1959), Treadwell and Hibbitts (1969), Smith and Werler (1969), Degenhardt et al. (1976), Hillis and Campbell (1982), and Morafka and Reyes (1994). Reproductive and ecological information is in Easterla (1975). The species was included in a biogeographical analysis of the Chihuahuan Desert by Morafka (1977). A range extension was provided by Irwin and Collins (1995). Maximum size for a male specimen is provided by Porras (1982). A bibliography was provided by Dixon (1987). The type specimen was listed by Marx (1958).

The species also was included in national and regional guides (frequently as *Tantilla rubra cucullata* or *T. r. diabolus*), many of which contain at least brief descriptions, by Conant (1958, 1975), Raun (1965), Cochran and Goin (1970), Behler and King (1979), Wauer (1980), Smith and Brodie (1982), Tenant (1984, 1985, 1998), Conant and Collins (1991, 1998), and Tenant and Bartlett (2000).

• **REMARKS.** This taxon has a checkered taxonomic history. Minton (1956) described it as a distinct species, based on a single specimen from Brewster County, Texas, and considered its closest relatives to be *T. nigriceps* and *T. eiseni* (= *T. planiceps*). Subsequently, Fouquette and Potter (1961) described *Tantilla diabolus* from Val Verde County, Texas. Smith and Werler (1969) discussed a third specimen allocated to *T. diabolus* (a second had been reported by Treadwell and Hibbitts 1969), and relegated it to a subspecies of *T. rubra*, in the absence of any discussion of its relationship to *T. cucullata*. Easterla (1975), in discussing the ecology of *T. cucullata*, relegated it to subspecific status within *T. rubra*, based on the conclusions of the paper (then in press) by Degenhardt et al. (1976). The latter authors demonstrated that *T. cucullata* and *T. rubra diabolus* were sympatric in the Big Bend National Park, but allopatric near Alpine and the Devil's River region. They concluded that *T. rubra diabolus* should be subsumed within *T. cucullata*, and that the latter should be recognized as the only subspecies of *T. rubra* in Texas.

We have departed somewhat from the orthography of the vernacular name of this species used by Collins (1997) in using the adjective "black-headed" to modify the noun "snake."

• **ETYMOLOGY.** The name *cucullata* is derived from the Latin *cucullus*, meaning a "hood," in reference to the black pigmentation of the head of the holotype.

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